

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 PM-03 INR-07 L-02 ACDA-05 NSAE-00

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FM USMISSION NATO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0055

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO ALL NATO CAPITALS 4998

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

USLOSACLANT

CINCLANT

USDOCOSOUTH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USNATO 0743

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, NATO, UK

SUBJ: SYG LUNS LETTER: CHANGES IN THE DEFENSE PROGRAM OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM

REF: USNATO 0727

TEXT OF SYG LUNS LETTER ON ABOVE SUBJECT, DATED FEB 10, 1975,
TO UK MOD MASON (CIRCULATED AS PO/75/10 FINAL) FOLLOWS:

BEGIN TEXT

CONCURRENTLY WITH YOUR STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
ON 3RD DECEMBER, 1974, SIR EDWARD PECK AND FIELD
MARSHAL SIR MICHAEL CARVER INITIATED THE PROCESS OF
CONSULTATION WITH THE ALLIANCE HERE IN BRUSSELS ON THE
OUTCOME OF THE BRITISH DEFENSE REVIEW. LAST WEEK, AND AGAIN
TODAY, THE DEFENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE OF NATO MET TO
CONSIDER THE EFFECT ON NATO SECURITY OF THE CHANGES PROPOSED
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IN THE BRITISH DEFENCE PROGRAMME AS A RESULT OF THIS REVIEW;
IN DOING SO THEY HAD THE BENEFIT OF DETAILED ASSESSMENTS BY
THE MAJOR NATO COMMANDERS AND BY THE MILITARY COMMITTEE. I
HAVE BEEN ASKED TO CONVEY THE VIEWS OF THE DEFENCE PLANNING

COMMITTEE TO YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES IN THE FOLLOWING TERMS.

2. YOUR ALLIES WISH TO EXPRESS THEIR SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, WHICH THE UNITED KINGDOM, IN COMMON WITH OTHER MEMBER COUNTRIES, IS NOW FACING. THEY WISH TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE IMPORTANT MILITARY CONTRIBUTION WHICH YOUR COUNTRY NOW MAKES, AND HAS TRADITIONALLY MADE, TO THE ALLIANCE. THEY RECOGNISE THAT EVEN IF THIS CONTRIBUTION IS REDUCED ON THE FULL SCALE PROPOSED, THE PROPORTION OF NATIONAL RESOURCES, MEASURED AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT, WHICH THE

UNITED KINGDOM WILL DEVOTE TO DEFENCE IS STILL LIKELY TO BE COMPARABLE TO THAT OF ITS MAJOR ALLIES. WHILE NOTING THAT A SMALL PROPORTION OF THE REDUCED DEFENCE EFFORT WILL BE IN SUPPORT OF COMMITMENTS OTHER THAN NATO, THEY WELCOME THE ASSURANCE THAT THE ALLIANCE IS REGARDED AS THE LINCHPIN OF BRITISH SECURITY, AND THAT NATO COMMITMENTS MUST REMAIN THE FIRST CHARGE ON BRITISH RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR DEFENCE.

3. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY GRATEFUL FOR THE DEPTH OF CONSULTATION OFFERED, AND FOR THE ASSURANCE THAT ONLY WHEN THIS CONSULTATION IS COMPLETED WILL FINAL DECISIONS BE ANNOUNCED.

4. NEVERTHELESS IT WILL BE NO SURPRISE TO YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES THAT THE REDUCTIONS PROPOSED HAVE CAUSED CONSIDERABLE DISQUIET WITHIN THE ALLIANCE. THEY ARE ON A SCALE CONSIDERABLY LARGER THAN THAT PROPOSED BY ANY OTHER ALLY IN RECENT YEARS; THEY AFFECT IN VARYING DEGREES THE VALIDITY OF NATO DEFENCES IN ALL REGIONS OF THE ALLIANCE, INCLUDING THE MARITIME AREAS; AND THEY INVOLVE ALL THREE MAJOR NATO COMMANDERS. IT IS NOT SURPRISING, THEREFORE, THAT THE NATO MILITARY AUTHORITIES CONCLUDE THAT YOUR PROPOSALS, IF IMPLEMENTED IN FULL, AND IF NOT OFFSET BY COMPENSATING MEASURES "WOULD REPRESENT A MAJOR REDUCTION OF NATO'S DEFENCE CAPABILITY IN ACE AND IN THE ACCHAN/ACLANT AREA, AND WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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CORRESPONDINGLY WEAKEN NATO'S CONVENTIONAL MILITARY CAPABILITY VIS-A-VIS THE WARSAW PACT".

5. THE DEFENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE ENDORSES THESE VIEWS. THEY ALSO ENDORSE THE ASSESSMENT OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE AS A WHOLE, THE TEXT OF WHICH IS ENCLOSED WITH THIS LETTER, AND TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF WHICH I INVITE YOUR ATTENTION.

6. THEY WOULD ALSO POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THE PROPOSED REDUCTIONS WOULD ALSO HAVE CONSEQUENCES OF A MORE POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NATURE. THE STRATEGIC SITUATION IN THE SOUTHERN REGION IS ALREADY A CAUSE FOR SERIOUS CONCERN AS A RESULT OF THE WEAKENING OF INDIGENOUS FORCES, THE

INSTABILITY OF THE AREA AND ITS EXPOSED POSITION VIS-A-VIS SOVIET PENETRATION AND THE POSSIBLE REPRECUSIONS OF CONFLICTS IN NEIGHBOURING THEATRES. THE ABANDONMENT OF BRITISH FORCE COMMITMENTS TO NATO IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WOULD (APART FROM THEIR MILITARY IMPLICATIONS) LEAVE THE UNITED STATES AS THE ONLY NON-MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRY TO MAINTAIN A PERMANENT PRESENCE THERE. THERE IS THE DANGER THAT THESE MOVES WOULD BE REGARDED BY THE SOVIET UNION, AND PERHAPS BY SOME SECTORS OF OUR OWN PUBLIC OPINION AS WELL, AS A WEAKENING OF NATO'S RESOLVE AND PURPOSE IN DEFENDING THE SOUTHERN REGION; THIS CANNOT BUT AFFECT THE SOLIDARITY OF THE ALLIANCE, ON WHICH ITS SECURITY SO LARGELY DEPENDS. THE SCALE OF POLITICO-MILITARY

DAMAGE WHICH COULD RESULT FROM SUCH WITHDRAWALS SEEMS SCARCELY COMMENSURATE WITH THE SAVINGS EXPECTED.

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7. GRAVE CONSIDERATIONS OF A SIMILAR NATURE WHICH ARE SPELLED OUT IN DETAIL IN THE MILITARY ASSESSMENTS, APPLY IN THE NORTHERN REGION, WHERE THE SECURITY OF NATO TERRITORY HAS TRADITIONALLY DEPENDED HEAVILY ON THE DETERRENT EFFECT OF EXTERNAL REINFORCEMENT, TO WHICH THE UNITED KINGDOM IS NOW PROPOSING TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION. THIS ALSO APPLIES TO THE MARITIME COMMANDS.

8. THE DEFENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE IS GLAD TO NOTE THAT

NO SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS ARE ENVISAGED IN THE CENTRAL REGION IN ADVANCE OF AN MBFR AGREEMENT, AND THAT CERTAIN INCREASES IN THE AIR SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR THIS AREA ARE PLANNED; THEY HOPE, HOWEVER, TO RECEIVE MORE INFORMATION IN DUE COURSE ON THE REORGANIZATION PROPOSED FOR BAOR. THEY ALSO NOTE WITH SATISFACTION THAT THE UNITED KINGDOM PROPOSES TO MAINTAIN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS PRESENT CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC NUCLEAR DETERRENT, AND TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE TACTICAL NUCLEAR FORCES TO ACE ON THE PRESENT SCALE.

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9. NEVERTHELESS THE ALLIES WISH TO EMPHASIZE ONCE AGAIN THAT, IN THE WORDS OF THE OTTAWA DECLARATION, "THEIR COMMON DEFENCE IS ONE AND INDIVISIBLE". NATO IS A SYSTEM OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY; A WEAKENING IN THE DEFENCE OF ONE REGION DIMINISHES THE SECURITY NOT ONLY OF THE COUNTRIES WITHIN THAT REGION, BUT OF THE ALLIANCE AS A WHOLE. INDEED THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE REDUCTIONS PROPOSED GO WIDER THAN THAT; THEY AFFECT NOT ONLY THE BALANCE OF FORCES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN THEATRE, BUT THE WORLD-WIDE STRATEGIC BALANCE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST. MOREOVER, IF A MAJOR PARTNER IN THE ALLIANCE NOW FEELS COMPELLED TO REDUCE ITS COMMITMENTS, THE UNFORTUNATE CONSEQUENCE COULD BE THAT OTHERS IN A SIMILAR POSITION MIGHT FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT TO RESIST PRESSURES TO DO LIKEWISE.

10. THESE ARE THE MAJOR POINTS OF CONCERN WHICH THE ALLIES, RECOGNISING THE POSITIVE AS WELL AS THE PROGRESSIVE NATURE OF THE CHANGES PROPOSED, HAVE ASKED ME TO EXPRESS. THEY HAVE ASKED ME ALSO TO CONVEY THEIR VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT OF FURTHER CONSULTATION, BEARING IN MIND THE ASSURANCES WHICH YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES HAVE GIVEN BOTH IN PARLIAMENT AND IN NATO THAT FINAL DECISIONS WILL ONLY BE REACHED WHEN CONSULTATION WITH THE ALLIES IS COMPLETE. THERE WOULD SEEM TO BE TWO PHASES IN THIS CONTINUING CONSULTATION:

(A) THE ALLIES TRUST THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL GIVE VERY SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ABOVE BEFORE LAYING THEIR PROPOSALS BEFORE PARLIAMENT NEXT MONTH. IN PARTICULAR THEY HOPE THAT BEFORE THIS THERE WILL BE FURTHER CONTACTS WITH NATO ON THE VARIOUS COMPENSATORY MEASURES WHICH HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED, E.G. PERIODIC NAVAL AND AIR VISITS TO THE MEDITERRANEAN, PARTICIPATION IN NAVOCFORMED, REALLOCATION OF

RESOURCES FROM OVERHEADS AND SUPPORT UNITS TO COMBAT CAPABILITIES, THE FURTHER EXPLOITATION OF CO-OPERATIVE PROGRAMMES IN NATO, AND THE MORE SPECIFIC COUNTER-PROPOSALS OF THE NATO MILITARY AUTHORITIES. THEY WOULD ALSO HOPE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE PROPOSED REORGANIZATION OF

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BAOR AND THE FUTURE RE-EQUIPMENT AND
MODERNIZATION PROBLEMS IN ALL THREE SERVICES;

(B) CONTINUED CONSULTATION BEYOND THE PUBLICATION OF
THE WHITE PAPER ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROPOSED CHANGES, USING THE ENTIRETY OF THE NATO
MACHINERY AVAILABLE, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND
SECURITY SITUATION AS THEY ARISE. THEY SUGGEST
THAT SOME OF THE REDUCTIONS PLANNED FOR THE
LONGER-TERM MIGHT BE AVOIDED BY SAVING RESOURCES
THROUGH INCREASED CO-OPERATION WITHIN NATO, E.G.
THROUGH RATIONALIZATION, CONSOLIDATION AND
CO-OPERATION, WITHOUT REDUCING THE OVERALL
DEFENCE EFFORT OF NATO.

11. IN BOTH CASES THE ALLIES HOPE THAT THE BRITISH
AUTHORITIES WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE MORE PRECISE INFORMATION
ABOUT THE FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF THE NEW PROGRAMME. IN THIS
CONTEXT THEY URGE THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO JUDGE THE SCALE
AND NATURE OF ITS MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO NATO, NOT IN
FINANCIAL TERMS ALONE, BUT IN TERMS OF ITS TOTAL VALUE AND THE
VALUE OF ITS CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS TO ALLIANCE DEFENCE AND
DETERRENCE IN ALL THEATRES, THEREBY LEAVING THE OPTION OPEN
FOR POSSIBLE ADJUSTMENTS IF PROVED NECESSARY.

12. THE DEFENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE LOOKS FORWARD TO
RECEIVING THE UNITED KINGDOM RESPONSE TO THESE VIEWS LATER
THIS MONTH. THERE WILL, OF COURSE, BE A NEED TO CO-ORDINATE
THE PUBLICATION OF THE NATO VIEW WITH THAT OF YOUR WHITE PAPER
WHEN THE TERMS OF BOTH HAVE BEEN FINALISED.
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